

Message Text

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FOR SECRETARY VANCE AND ADMIN GILLIGAN

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SPOP

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING GLOBAL
PROBLEMS-POPULATION GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION

REF: A) STAE 107370; B) LILONGWE 656

1. FORTUNATELY, MALAWI HAS NOT HAD FOOD SHORTAGES FOR SOME YEARS BECAUSE PRESIDENT BANDA, FROM THE TIME THAT HE FIRST TOOK OVER IN THE EARLY 1960'S, HAS GIVEN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION TOPMOST PRIORITY. (HE HAS CONSTANTLY STRESSED RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND AVOIDANCE OF PROJECTS WHICH WOULD CREATE A SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER URBAN POPULATION.) THIS COUNTRY THEREFORE EVOLVED FROM A POORLY-FED COUNTRY TO ONE THAT IS SELF-SUFFICIENT IN FOODSTUFFS AND MODESTLY BUT METHODICALLY BUILDING UP SURPLUS FOOD RESERVES (PRIMARILY MAIZE). MALAWI HAS ALSO DIVERSIFIED ITS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION INTO CASH CROPS WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY INCREASING ITS FOOD OUTPUT; EXPORTS OF TOBACCO AND TEA HAVE GREATLY ENHANCED MALAWI'S ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL STABILITY.

2. RELATED TO FOOD PRODUCTION IS THE QUESTION OF HEALTH, WHICH I AM SURPRISED IS NOT DIRECTLY ADDRESSED

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IN REF A. DESPITE THE FACT THAT PRESIDENT BANDA IS A DOCTOR BY PROFESSION, ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO HEALTH PROBLEMS IS ONLY NOW BEING GIVEN BY THE GOM. IN THAT FIELD, THE MOST PERSISTENT PROBLEMS ARE DISEASE (MALARIA AND BILHARZIA), MALNUTRITION AND LACK OF SANITATION IN THE RURAL AREAS. WE SEE A COUNTRY NOW ADEQUATELY SUPPLIED WITH FOODSTUFFS BUT WHICH DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT

VARIETY IN THE DIET TO REDUCE THE LARGE NUMBER OF MAL-
NOURISHED CHILDREN ONE SEES IN SOME RURAL AREAS.
SINCE STATE AND AID HAVE DURING THE PAST YEAR AGREED
THAT AID TO MALAWI SHOULD BE RESUMED, WE HAVE BEEN
ATTEMPTING TO CONVINCE THE GOM OF OUR ABILITY AND
READINESS TO PROVIDE A HEALTH PROGRAM.

WE EXPECT TO HAVE AN AID HEALTH EXPERT VISITING HERE
NEXT MONTH WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THE SADAP HEALTH
TEAM'S FINDINGS AND BEGIN THE OUTLINE OF AN AID HEALTH
PROJECT. OTHER DONORS HAVE PROVIDED MALAWI WITH
ASSISTANCE IN HEALTH BUT OVERALL THE PROGRAMS LACK
COHESION AND FOCUS. I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT
PRESIDENT BANDA DURING THE PAST YEAR HAS GIVEN ADDED
STRESS TO HEALTH (WITHOUT HOWEVER INCREASING THAT
MINISTRY'S BUDGET) AND WE HOPE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO
EMBARK ON AN AID HEALTH PROGRAM HERE IN FY80 OR 81.

3. FOOD ASSISTANCE IS NOT GENERALLY REQUIRED IN
MALAWI, BUT THERE IS A SMALL MODICUM OF WFP PROGRAMS
FOR FARMERS TEMPORARILY AWAY FROM THEIR LANDS FOR
TRAINING PROGRAMS, ETC. ONE POSSIBLE AREA FOR FURTHER
FOOD AID IS FOR A PROGRAM WHICH MALAWI, ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE
AND WITH THE HELP OF SEVERAL DONORS, HAS INSTITUTED:
GRAVITY-FED WATER PROJECTS NOW REACHING NEARLY 10
PERCENT OF THE POPULATION WHICH IS EXPECTED TO DOUBLE IN THE NEXT
5-8 YEARS. THESE PROJECTS HAVE BEEN BUILT
ON A SELF-HELP BASIS, I.E. VILLAGERS DIG DITCHES AND MOVE
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THE PIPES. VILLAGERS ARE REPORTEDLY EAGER FOR THESE WATER
PROJECTS BUT TAKING FARMERS AWAY FROM THEIR WORK ACTS
AS A DISINCENTIVE, EITHER TO FURTHER PRODUCTION OR TO
THEIR PARTICIPATION IN WORKING ON THE PROJECTS; WFP
ASSISTANCE WOULD ACCELERATE EXPANSION OF THIS PROGRAM, ALLOWING
MALAWI TO SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW ONE COUNTRY
IMPROVES ITS SITUATION ON A SELF-HELP BASIS.

4. OTHER DONORS HAVE BEEN CONCERNED THAT AGRICULTURAL
YIELDS ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY INCREASING HERE. HOWEVER,
NOT ALL PRODUCTION IS REPORTED STATISTICALLY, FOR
EXAMPLE, SUBSISTENCE PRODUCTION AND THE SEEMINGLY
SMALL AMOUNTS THAT ARE SOLD PRIVATELY. (ADMARC, THE
PARASTATAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING ORGANIZATION, BUYS
THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE SMALL-HOLDERS OUTPUT.)
PERHAPS THIS IS THE RESULT OF TOO MUCH SUCCESS, REFLECTING
THE FARMERS' HAVE SUFFICIENT FOODSTUFFS FOR THEIR
FAMILIES ARE NOT INTERESTED IN MUCH ADDITIONAL
INCOME. THE WORLD BANK, WHICH HAS THE LARGEST SHARE
OF ASSISTANCE TO MALAWI'S AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT,
IS LOOKING INTO THE PROBLEM OF INCENTIVES.

5. THAT BRINGS US TO THE ONE PROBLEM IN MALAWI'S
DEVELOPMENT ON WHICH LITTLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE:

FAMILY PLANNING. AS IN MOST OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES, MALAWI'S LEADERSHIP (PRESIDENT BANDA AND TRADITIONAL VILLAGE LEADERS) ARE OFFICIALLY OPPOSED TO CONTROLLING POPULATION GROWTH. THERE IS A SLIGHT GLIMMER OF HOPE, HOWEVER. AT MY URGING, AMBASSADOR STEVENSON RAISED THE SUBJECT FIRST WITH THE THEN-MINISTER OF HEALTH AND, THE DAY BEFORE HE DEPARTED POST IN MAY 1978, WITH PRESIDENT BANDA HIMSELF. NEITHER RULED OUT THE EVENTUAL NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING

BUT PRESIDENT BANDA UNREALISTICALLY SAID THAT "MALAWI HAS ROOM FOR TWICE AS MANY PEOPLE BEFORE WE HAVE TO THINK OF" FAMILY PLANNING. OTHER DONORS ARE SUBTLY INCLUDING SOME FP COMPONENTS IN THEIR PROJECTS, SO LONG AS THE TERM FP OR ANYTHING SIMILAR IS NOT USED. CONTRACEPTIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEVICES ARE AVAILABLE BUT COSTLY FOR THE RURAL POPULATION, MOST OF WHOM PROBABLY ARE NOT AWARE OF THEIR EXISTENCE. DOCTORS ALSO HAVE A LIMITED AMOUNT OF FREEDOM TO PRESCRIBE ABORTIONS OR SUGGEST CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS; THUS FAR THEY ARE CAUTIOUS ABOUT GIVING SUCH ADVICE BUT ARE GRADUALLY MORE INCLINED TO MAKE SUCH RECOMMENDATIONS.

6. FP EDUCATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY SHOULD BE A PRIMARY TARGET FOR US. SINCE I AM ALSO THE AID AFFAIRS OFFICER HERE, I PLAN TO KEEP THIS SUBJECT UPPERMOST IN THE MINDS OF OUR AID PLANNERS AS WE EMBARK ON OTHER PROJECTS.
SHEINBAUM

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